

Next Level Warriorship:  
Intellectuals Role in Acts of Resistance within the Idle No More Movement

by

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## ABSTRACT

Everyday living, as an Indigenous person, is an act of resistance. On December 21, 2012, there was a national day of action that included rallies and demonstrations happening all over the world to stand in solidarity with First Nations Indigenous peoples in Canada under the banner Idle No More (INM). The pressure of the movement all came to an end after the cooptation from a few First Nation leadership on January 11, 2013. Despite the failures, the INM movement brought hope, the urgency to act, and ideas of the decolonization and resurgence process. This movement was educational in focus and with that, there is the need to explore essential roles to advance Indigenous resistance to ensure Indigenous liberation. Here I explore the role of the intellectual, and in particular three scholars who provide next level warriorship. Their contributions redirected the conceptualization of decolonization to a process of resurgence. In this manner, authentic Indigenous nationhood is possible.

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## Chapter 1

### INTRODUCTION

Organizers of the Idle No More (INM) movement continued to put a call out for National and International days of action to pressure the Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper to end the hunger strike by meeting the demands of Chief Theresa Spence. On December 23, 2012, events were organized in Tempe, Arizona, to stand in solidarity with First Nations and a round dance flash mob took place at the Arizona Mills Mall. These acts essentially affirmed, in my mind, the power of Indigenous resistance. As an observer and participant in these events, I wanted to learn more about how Indigenous intellectuals address and engage in acts of resistance. This thesis seeks to explore Indigenous Intellectuals role within social movements and acts of resistance when using the idea of decolonization to dismantle internal oppression and resurgence to disrupt Canadian colonization.

Fortunately for me, those Arizona events occurred after a semester of heavy reading and writing in my American Indian Studies classes that provided new theoretical outlooks and a framework to help my understanding of the INM “uprising.” Influenced by Taiaiake Alfred’s *Peace, Power, Righteousness: An Indigenous Manifesto*, I turned to his blog and found “Idle No More and Indigenous Nationhood” that started my research on this topic. Alfred, a Mohawk intellectual provided guidance during INM, as he states, “Idle No More has been a good and necessary thing ... educating the wider public, making the connections between our Native rights and the democratic rights of all citizens, and arguing for the protection of the environment under the Idle No More banner. But . . . Idle No More is not sufficient in itself to decolonize this country or even

to make meaningful change in the lives of people” (Alfred *Idle No More* 348). What I would agree with is that the organizers and visionaries of INM did not focus on decolonization; but, I would also say that was not the intentions of INM. The four founders, many organizers, and Chief Theresa Spence were not situating themselves in direct opposition to the colonial state, Canada; rather they were calling attention to the false promises and the historical relationship that has been neglecting the inherent rights of First Nations. This approach is what I believe brought a wider spectrum of support from Canadian citizens and Indigenous people around the world.

Reading Alfred’s article on INM and in particular, the statement above, encouraged me to write a thesis about the role of Indigenous intellectuals and how they can guide Indigenous peoples in the direction of radical and dramatic change. This transformational change would force Canada to honor First Nations inherent rights, change the way corporations conduct business on the land, and change the way settlers interact with the land and Indigenous people. There is a long way to come, which is why I see the importance of researching resistance and using theories grounding Indigenous epistemologies and anti-colonial ideas. I use INM as the historical context to examine three scholars: Leanne Simpson, Taiaiake Alfred, and Glen Coulthard. The three scholars have written on and for the Idle No More movement. Furthermore, the three also conceptualize decolonization and resurgence that produces strategies and tactics to organize more effective means of resisting colonization to uphold the inherent rights of Indigenous nations that have existed since time immemorial.

Decolonization and resurgence are ideas that I see in providing the proper defense against colonization and to envision a reality that honors Indigenous lives, because

decolonization will assure acts of resistance is in direct opposition to colonization (Alfred *Peace, Power, Righteousness* 26, 27, 28) and resurgence is creating the custom effects based on traditional values and principles. Resistance, in this study, describes the accumulation of actions that defies colonization. For example, Leanne Simpson describes resistance as the action of simply existing in spite of trauma and pain that has never healed (Simpson *Dancing on our Turtles Back*). Simpson, who is Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg mentioned her people have resisted “by simply surviving and being alive” (Simpson *Dancing on our Turtles Back*). The stories, songs, ceremonies, and other fragments of the culture is being woven back together by current and eventually future generations, which is why it is important to hold on to everything. The work now, is using the idea of resurgence to recreate Indigenous nationhood since Indigenous intellectuals has had the time to grasp and theorize decolonization.

The direction needing to happen, is ensuring future acts of resistance is grounding Indigenous nationhood, and exercising the rights for self-determination rather than self-governance; this requires a modification in how we think and act (Alfred, Corntassel *Being Indigenous*). Decolonization is that modification because sovereignty has enclosed Indigenous Nations in rhetoric that is loaded with state-sanctioned jargon that uses colonial definitions to define First Nations relations to Canada, the municipalities, and even within their own governing structures (Alfred, Corntassel *Being Indigenous*; Alfred *Peace, Power, Righteousness* 77-83). Rushing into cultural spaces without understanding the basic principle of decolonization, thinking and acting in opposition to colonization, runs the risk of furthering colonization. The problem with colonization is how it infects nearly every Indigenous space, which means there is a need for Indigenous

people/intellectuals who are able to detect/diagnose when colonization is present and possible remedies to deescalate the effects of colonization.

When cleansing from colonization through the idea of decolonization, it is essential to start considering the idea of resurgence, which is to engage less with the colonial-state and more on activating Indigenous living (Alfred *Wasase* 179, 180; Simpson *As We Have Always Done* 49; Coulthard *Red Skin, White Masks*). With Indigenous narratives elements of resurgence is embedded in the stories and this fosters a learning environment and for that reason the majority of people who partake in the work of decolonization and resurgence are intellectuals even if they have not obtained a college degree. As Leanne Simpson puts it, “Storytelling is at its core decolonizing, because it is a process of remembering, visioning and creating a just reality where Nishnaabeg live as both *Nishnaabeg* and *peoples*” (Simpson *Dancing on Our Turtles Back*). Thankfully apart of Indigenous resistance was holding onto stories, songs, and ceremonies.

Now that we have identified three important concepts addressed in this thesis, -- resistance, decolonization, and resurgence as used by the three scholars-- let’s discuss these three terms relation to the INM movement. The direct actions that made up the INM movement as a historical moment in time, from the winter of 2012 to 2013, continued the resistance of Indigenous peoples and First Nations. Both Simpson and Alfred would agree that Idle No More was not a movement based on decolonization, and this may have to due with the Idle No More Manifesto written by the four founding women of the INM movement, here they used sovereignty to frame the issue of Bill C-45 (Gordon 71,73). Additionally, the movement never declared a direct opposition to Canadian’s continued reliance on colonization to determine the relationship with First Nations (Alfred *Idle No*



*More*; Simpson *As We Have Always Done* 226). The direction of the movement was not grounded in decolonization, yet, the conversations happening and the engagement that took place among organizers, activist, and participants did introduce the idea and even pushed for greater opposition towards the end of the movement. INM and resurgence has limited evidence, however those who opposed the movement questioned why Indigenous people are reactionary as opposed to partaking in actions that do not justify colonization. Additionally, I also believe the rise in occupation camps are more opportune to the idea of resurgence.

Colonization has maintained a presence in the lives of Indigenous people, as seen with INM, and this is so because colonization needs Indigenous land to accumulate more wealth. This means that Canada, and the United States by extension, is continually seeking to appropriate, exploit, and destroy the land that Indigenous people rely on (Simpson *Dancing on Our Turtles Back*). Generations of Indigenous peoples have internalized violence perpetuated by colonization, this happened by implementing Canadian principles and values within the family and community unit. Eventually, these oppressive values are replicated and embedded within the political and governing structures of the Indigenous nations that ends up deepening internal colonization (Poupart; Alfred *Peace, Power, and Righteousness* 58-59). The internalized oppression is an issue and if decolonization was the leading agenda for INM, I do not believe it would have received as much support as it has from both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people.

The INM movement was a time where the conversations among participants provide opportunities for Indigenous people to seek alternative ways to counter the harm

of colonialism and internalized oppression. This matters, because colonization often leaves us in a position where we are unable to think of what Indigenous nationhood looks like outside of Canadian sanctioned institutions and epistemological lens (Coulthard *Red Skin, White Masks*; Alfred *Peace, Power, Righteousness* 58, 59; Poupart 94). Simpson shares a Nishnaabeg term used to describe living as a colonized person, *Zhaaganashiiyaadizi* (Simpson *Dancing on our Turtles Back*). This term relates to decolonization because it positions Nishnaabeg people in opposition to living as a colonized person, that way thoughts on how to act and behave are using traditional values and principles.

My thesis focuses on the scholarship of Leanne Simpson, Taiaiake Alfred, and Glen Coulthard as their research is on Indigenous resistance and framing decolonization and resurgence. In particular, during the INM movement, each of them proposed diverse alternatives such as indigenizing resistance, decolonization, and resurgence that functioned to awaken idle minds and bodies. Alfred focused on how the movement was coopted by the Assembly of First Nations, which confirms his previous work on how the “co-operation” of Indigenous leaders further Canadian colonization. Simpson touches on several subjects that overall infuses the idea of resurgence. As we see with her latest book, *As We Have Always Done*, she discusses the difficulties when applying decolonization to INM because of the actions of the main spokespeople and those in charge of the dissemination of information. Lastly, Coulthard places INM within a historical context because he explains how the 1969 “White Papers” initiated the agenda of termination. He will later discuss in his book *Red Skin, White Masks*, how the

movement had elements of decolonization, seen within internal spaces out of view from mainstream society.

The sociological impact of acts of resistance can heal when the community comes together. It is up to the community to decide what roles and resources are needed to accomplish the end goal, to secure Indigenous nationhood for generations to come. The INM movement included the roles of many people in planning and organizing the events of INM that created the momentum. Here is where I explore the role of the intellectual by sharing the scholarship of three scholars. The intellectual communities—consist of storytellers, scholars, artist, activist, and organizers—and their responsibility is forming the narrative based on Indigenous epistemologies, ontologies, and axiology's, that counters the colonial narrative. Intellectuals' participation in social movements reaffirms grassroots and Indigenous communities need for direct action on a local to global level, as seen with INM.

### *Methodology*

The methodologies used throughout exemplify the need for Indigenous scholarship that shapes and reinforce resistance, decolonization, and resurgence. The variety of methodologies or what Linda Tuhiwai Smith refers to as “Indigenous projects” are outlined in her book *Decolonizing Methodologies* that I use to analyze the relevant works of Simpson, Alfred, and Coulthard; as well as the historical significance of INM (Smith 143). Smith uses a combination of Indigenous practices and modern social science methods for the “Indigenous projects” (Smith 144). This methodological approach shows how decolonization and resurgence creates authentic nationhood, which I describe as the

means to govern the people within traditional territory and the institutions are grounded within traditional values and principles.

The “Indigenous projects” advance decolonization and resurgence through engaging the audience to consider their own experiences to colonization, as well as to critically assess situations where colonization is normalized. For my thesis I use the following eight: connecting, reading, celebrating survival (survivance), envisioning, reframing, protecting, and sharing. When it comes to connecting and reading it is important to show the unification as well as the originality that exists in the readings and material used, especially Simpson, Alfred, and Coulthard, in relation to the ideas of colonization, resistance, decolonization, resurgence, and nationhood. Now with the project of “celebrating survival,” I weave throughout the thesis elements that show the resilience and strength needed to deal with colonization and how First Nations continuously create alternatives that allow them to hold on to cultural values and principles (Smith 146). Reframing is approached by showing how decolonization can reposition Indigenous people into a position of power by disrupting colonization through resurgence (Smith 154). The project of protecting reframes colonization as this modern day monster, and the historical event of INM builds upon previous acts of resistance that have continued to fight colonization. Rooted in the scholarship of INM and previous social movements are strategies used to achieve liberation. The next project is sharing, where Simpson, Coulthard, and Alfred shared their thoughts and ideas that further shaped the narrative of the INM movement and gives us a historical context to advance Indigenous resistance (Smith 162). Lastly, the project of envisioning gives me the opportunity to present the information in a way to envision alternatives; alternatives to

living and acts of resistance (Smith 153); this will focus on strengths that actualize decolonization and resurgence.

My methodologies, in some way, is also influenced by Margaret Kovach, *Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts*, which I use to discuss the intellectual's role within acts of resistance more in depth. Her writing was geared towards Indigenous graduate students and those focused on research, "My wish is that Indigenous graduate students and other interested folks can see this book as a contribution in upholding Indigenous research design, and that it will encourage continued conversations and action among Indigenous researchers and their non-Indigenous allies in the emergent field of Indigenous methodologies" (20). I grappled with the question, why I do not center my own tribal knowledge as a form of methodology (Kovach 121), it comes down to understanding how deeply entrenched my upbringing has been due to the effects of colonization and displacement. I would not be able to properly provide an Ojibwe lens, and is why I value the work of intellectuals who shows the significance of returning to the homelands to take up the meaningful work of resurgence. With that said, it is important to fully understand decolonization and resurgence and is why I turn to the INM movement, Simpson, Alfred, and Coulthard for greater comprehension.

## Chapter 2

### IDLE NO MORE HISTORICAL CONTEXT, OPPORTUNITIES, AND LIMITATIONS

The INM movement caught on like wildfire once Chief Theresa Spence put her life on the line and the educational campaign established by the four founding women continued throughout Canada. Once the movement reached the Internet and social media the opportunities to network were endless, for example, using webinars, social media post, memes, blogpost, and YouTube videos. It was a moment for Canada to wake up and realize they did not learn from their mistakes as perceived in their attempt to reconcile for past wrongs back in 2008, when Canada apologized for their involvement in the boarding school era. The reconciliation policy was contradicted through the passing of Bill C-45 because land was still a main pursuit for Canada this deepened the structure of colonization in the lives of First Nations (Palmer 39; Coulthard *Red Skin, White Masks*). The bills were set on changing the way Indigenous nations operate through using their sovereign powers and altering their relationship to the land by uplifting federal protection. Sovereignty was a concern for INM because it was a term the people used to articulate their powers, yet, once leaders used the term to explain their cooperation within Canada governing policies, it became a tool for the colonial entity more so than for First Nations.

INM conversations brought a renewed urgency to the colonization on First Nations for two reasons. First, First Nation resistance was relatable to Indigenous people around the world because its members used colonization to frame issues that were impacting Indigenous people, such as low socioeconomic standards and lack of access to culture and land. Second, settlers have greater awareness of the history that benefits

settler-colonialist at the expense of Indigenous people (McLean 92, 93; Kinew 96). Additionally, INM introduced realistic ways to protect the knowledge of the ancestors that make up Indigenous people's identity (Alfred *Idle No More* 349). INM set it self apart from past Indigenous social movements and modern non-Indigenous movements because what collided were the efforts from previous acts of resistance and the technology/tools of today's society.

The INM Movement is not a new phenomenon as it pertains to Indigenous resistance because Indigenous people have always been against colonization. Canada's first Prime Minister John A. Macdonald and the following Prime Minister William Mackenzie had no issue in using violence against First Nations (George Manuel 20). The first administration, Prime Minister Macdonald's served from 1867-1873 and 1878-1891, and he created the first legislation concern First Nation's territories (George Manuel 21). During the administration of Prime Minister Mackenzie in 1876, the Indian Act was first passed that created the first legislation defining what an Indian is (George Manuel 22). The Indian Act recognizes the difference between Canadians and Indigenous people which in turn acknowledges their inherent rights. With amendments to the Indian Act is eventually uplifted much of the oppressive legislation like having the right to vote and citizenship.

In 1969 Indigenous people stopped their discussions on amending the Indian Act any further because it could be seen as trying to change the provisions to treaty rights. The goal of the "White Papers" was to terminate the relationship embedded in the Indian Act. There was much resistance for example there was a report to counter the "White Papers" that was called the "Red Papers" by Harold Cardinal. Even with the rejection of

the “White Papers” that were to come a few years later after its introduction, it was still promised to apply termination like legislation in future policy (Diabo 55). Bill C-45 is seen as that legislation continuing the agenda of termination.

### *History of Idle No More*

On September 4, 2012, First Nations became aware of proposed changes to the Indian Act in Omnibus Budget Bill C-45 and other bills. The intentions of the bills were to expedite colonization and the theft of land (Coulthard *Red Skin, White Masks*; Diabo 51-53; Kino-nda-niimi 389). At the time Bill C-45 was introduced, Canada was writing the report on Truth and Reconciliation that listened to the survivors of the boarding school era and promised to forge new relationships between Canada and First Nations. To show Canada’s hypocrisy Indigenous academics, political commentators, and activists responded quickly by creating attention to the colonization implanted in Bill C-45 (Coulthard *Red Skin, White Masks*). INM was updating the new generations of the flawed relationship that existed between Canada and First Nations. Simultaneously, it was to update previous activist that strategies must include ideas on decolonization and resurgence. Evidence clearly shows the Canadian government has no respect for Indigenous peoples.

Several factors upset both First Nation and Canadians; Bill C-45 strips First Nations of their sovereignty, uplifts the federal protection on over one million lakes and rivers, and it was over four hundred pages that gave little time for inquiry or consultation. Bill C-45 seeks to make amendments to the Indian Act in terms of voting and surrendering land (Diabo 52). This will allow decisions to be made in the hands of a few by decreasing the amount of votes required for tribal council. Bill C-45 symbolized the



continued unjust policies disguised as progressive initiatives to further colonization (The Kino-nda-niimi Collective, 389). The Indian Act is the piece of legislation governing the relationship between First Nations and Canada since 1867. The Indian Act is not favored as some believe it gives superior powers to Canada in regards to Indigenous peoples rights, still, it recognizes aboriginal rights.

Unfortunately, when understood historically, the elimination of indigeneity and the attempt to wipe out Indigenous nationhood is an everyday reality for First Nations, Inuit, and Metis (Alfred *Peace, Power, Righteousness* 8; Coulthard *Red Skin, White Mask*). To counter the bills, INM was created to address colonization and then it ignited into a movement where people from around the globe stood in solidarity to collectively rise against colonization. All the anger, frustration, and worry that the bill caused was eventually matched with visions of love and hope.

Idle No More was created by Nina Wilson, Sylvia McAdam, Sheelah McLean, and Jessica Gordon who organized on social media and facilitated teach-ins as a reaction to Bill C-45 (Kino-nda-niimi 21). On November 10, 2012, in Saskatoon, Canada, the four founding women held a teach-in to explain Bill C-45 and the other bills that were seeking to alter the governing powers for leaders who wish to negotiate land. This event set the tone of INM as being an educational campaign (Coulthard *Red Skin, White Masks*; McAdam 66). To the founders, the campaign was to reach as many people as they could, including elders and those without access to social media (McAdam 66). Idle means a person is living without purpose and is not working towards something meaningful. I see these women as calling out the idleness caused by colonization that allows Canada to have easy access to the land, which these four women challenged.

The four women used social media for outreach, and Jessica Gordon sent out the first #IdleNoMore tweet on November 4, 2012 (Kino-nda-niimi 389-390). By November 29, 2012, the Idle No More Facebook page was created to allow organizers to build followers using the #IdleNoMore hashtag (Kino-nda-niimi 390). Sylvia McAdam discussed how her intention for the movement was to address the legislation and did not know that it would resonate with people around the world, this has helped her understand how impactful colonization has been (McAdam 67).

Using social media formed many connections, however by relying on it the movement formed relationships with little accountability (Simpson *As We Have Always Done* 224). Yet, setbacks are opportunities to learn and I see the heavy reliance on social media as a crutch for the generation of Indigenous people, who are not connected to people and place through dispossession. This was a time to find peoples place within the movement as many are not familiar with any form of resistance.

The movement generated efforts to organize among those who were fortunate enough to connect as INM organizers were calling for days of action and supporters wanted to stand in solidarity. Tactics that were used by INM organizers were teach-ins, blockades, connecting on social media, and round dance flash mobs. The strategies were to communicate how Canada settler-state operates in direct opposition to Indigenous peoples.

On a separate journey, yet building upon the momentum of INM, Chief Theresa Spence declared a hunger strike on December 11, 2012, to bring awareness to Canadian government's lack of acknowledgment of treaty rights and to protest Bill C-45. Chief Spence's hunger strike continued until Prime Minister Harper and the Governor General

(the Queen of England's representative) agreed to meet with her (Kino-nda-niimi 391-393).

The hunger strike accomplished a number of things, especially since it is what most people remember because of the sacrifice Chief Spence made. It showed Indigenous people everywhere that there are individuals willing to risk their health for a political and spiritual purpose (Simpson *Fish Broth* 156,157). On the flip side it also showed the unification and solidarity that is organized when an Indigenous leader is willing to make such sacrifice (Simpson *Fish Broth*; Gabriel 157). Another important feature was the mixed emotions that were felt during the duration of her hunger strike, there was anger, worry, fear, love, compassion, empathy (Gabriel 157). There was even talk as to what would happen if Prime Minister Harper never agreed to a meeting, that got many talking about next steps that included extreme means of defense.

The INM movement progressed after Harper passed Bill C-45 as the Jobs and Growth Act on December 14 that is when the circulation of content flooded social media through posts and graphic art. Passing of the bill definitely escalated things, which led to the first round dance flash mob on December 17, in Regina, Canada, at the Cornwall Centre Shopping Mall (Kino-nda-niimi 393). Immediately after, Indigenous led actions – blockades, rallies, round dance flash mobs, teach-ins – spread beyond Canada, reaching places like New Zealand, India, and Mexico. Those who were drawn to the movement needed an outlet for all the emotions they were feeling as the actions that were happening were inspiring many.

As Chief Spence's hunger strike progressed, more and more people worried about her health. The rising pressure surrounding the hunger strike and global protest led to

Prime Minister Harper accepting a meeting with First Nation leaders. The *Timeline*, in *The Winter We Danced*, notes that, “Through his office, Prime Minister Stephen Harper announces that he will hold a ‘meeting’ with Aboriginal leaders ‘coordinated by the Assembly of First Nations’ that ‘will focus on treaty relationship and aboriginal rights and economic development’ on January 11. The Governor-General will not attend” (397). The governor-general can sit in for the queen who is generally seen as the superior governing authority between First Nations and Canada.

By January 9, 2013, Chief Spence announced that she would not attend the meeting because her demands were not met. Chief Spence’s reluctedness to attend the meeting escalated the movement and organizers did a call to action (Kino-nda-niimi Collective 398). A boycott was initiated by the organizers, to stand in solidarity with Chief Spence and the INM movement. The problems with the meeting was its selectiveness on who could attend. Also, the Queen or her representative would not be present (Kino-nda-niimi 399). The January 11 meeting included the Prime Minister, the Assembly of First Nations, and sixteen First Nation Chiefs (Kino-nda-niimi 398) and they discussed economic pursuits that would bring jobs to the community. However, none of the INM organizers/activist concerns were addressed and Prime Minister Harper still had intentions of keeping Bill C-45.

Even with the meeting on January 11, the power that came from the movement did not dissipate but instead transformed into more centralized areas of focus such as environmental destruction, missing and murdered Indigenous women, and the youth suicide epidemic happening within First Nations (Coulthard *Red Skin, White Masks*). The

co-optation of the movement indicated future resistance must address the contemporary leadership and the principles they are prioritizing when making decisions.

### *Healing and Stories*

It is important to highlight the healing aspects of the movement because it allowed individuals to tell stories about their painful experiences stemming from the European invasion of their homeland. People who previously had not learned or were not allowed to express their emotional, mental, and spiritual frustrations related to colonization were now sharing their experiences through the INM movement. The movement, therefore, provided a context where colonization was expressed as a root cause of their frustration and pain. It took courage for people to share their stories, but with each story it advanced the counter narrative to colonization (Boulanger, Simpson 317).

The knowledge produced out of the INM movement facilitated exercises that were educational in nature. An example of an exercise is comparing and contrasting, especially in how others explain colonization and their experiences of living as an Indigenous person in a modern world. The stories fostered a learning atmosphere for non-Indigenous people and Indigenous people to start in their process of healing from historical trauma and guilt. Thus, INM opened opportunities for them to see how others are healing (Boulanger, Simpson 319).

Individual stories expressed how colonization had impacted the lives of Indigenous as seen within the book, *The Winter We Danced* (Kino-nda-niimi). Stories were also being shared on social media, were being told on video format and uploaded to

YouTube, and it was being written among the countless comments that are attached to the countless amounts of content shared during INM. There is a wealth of information embedded in stories that advance direct action. Since the movement had a heavy Internet presence, those who were active in the movement found it useful to create art and content using different mediums. Stories were told using poetry, paintings, drawings, graphic art, songs, online videos, and even written works. The art reflected the pain and mixed emotions stemming from the trauma of colonization (McMahon 99).

*A Tribe Called Red* is a great example of providing sound that many used on edited videos. They created a tribute song for INM, “The Road,” and they regularly created music that raises the consciousness of its listeners (Birnie 2013). At The song, “The Road,” maintains a solid high drum beat that is maintained throughout the entire song. Drums were an important symbol of the INM movement because it resembled the heart beat. The beating of the drum was not to represent any normal rhythm experienced during social songs because the movement raised the heart beat and anxieties so it was nice to see that reflected in the song. Another feature of the song was the electric beat that was mixed alongside the traditional drum beat was not too distracting. It was a song you would listen to when people are late up night organizing and preparing banners. You could listen to the song as rallies and direct action was taken place. And the song could even be played in the background while conversations are taken place. The song moved bodies and souls, that is what art does.

Stories and art are instrumental in Indigenous knowledge production and to share with the world builds upon the Indigenous narrative necessary to counter colonization (Simpson *Dancing on Our Turtles Back*). I believe all Indigenous people are artists

because we continue to live within colonization and it takes a creative mindset to conduct oneself in today's reality. Art, including written word, expresses the creative skill and imagination necessary to appreciate the beauty and emotional power that has manifested in the face of colonization.

The movement was inspirational to many as it was an important to continue the work of past activism but needed the right foundation to do so and INM was that foundation. Simpson conducts an interview with Siku Allooloo, a Haitian and Inuk woman who grew up on Denendeh (Simpson, Allooloo 193). In the interview she discusses the history of resistance on Denendeh and why INM was a movement that spoke to her and the organizers she worked with. The effects of colonization on her homelands is why she put in the work, which is a common thread among INM participants' involvement with the movement:

For me, it meant the arrival of my time to step in and join my Indigenous sisters and brothers in breathing life into our collective sense of being; to raise ourselves up and support one another in asserting our vitality as Indigenous peoples; and to take up our power in our own hands. We all experience the oppression and suffering that colonial systems continue to impose on us, and there is much to be done. Participating in Idle No More at the time meant pooling our energy and resources to help one another in our respective and collective struggles, and building strong connections across all kinds of borders. For me, it was a starting point, a way to put myself forward, to join forces with other like-hearted people, and to set our energies in motion towards what we most believe in: the strengthening

and empowerment of Indigenous nations and statement of balance in our relationships on every level. (Simpson, Allooloo 195)

As Indigenous people and settler allies were healing together it was also with deep consideration that healing can only come so far until colonization needs confronted. What is required is a shift in the way First Nations work with the Canadian government, and Simpson shares her colleague's perspective in how that should be done, "Coulthard demands that we stop seeking recognition from the state of our cultural distinctiveness, of our inherent rights to self-government, of the state's treaty obligations under the domination of settler colonialism...he maintains that instead these politics serve only to entrench settler colonial power" (*As We have Always Done* 176). Recognition is important because Coulthard argues that apart of the colonial agenda is the internal oppression maintained through Canada's control over First Nations and Indigenous peoples with the limited and narrow idea of what "aboriginal rights" entail. This approach directly disrupts and challenges colonization through refusing to participate in the fictional and mythological creation of Canadian powers over Indigenous nation that has existed since time immemorial. The process of resurgence brings distance between colonial structures and Indigenous nations. This distance is a form of protest and has elements of a boycott because it is the active assertion to detect when colonization is present which will eventually create a filtration system capable of calling out colonization. To then go through the process of resurgence one is better prepared to deal and cope with settler colonial violence, thus making decolonization crucial in the healing process.



To heal properly another feature vital to INM were the company of youth and elders, as INM prioritized nonviolent direct action our most vulnerable are able to live and participate knowing they are safe on their homeland, which was to deflect Canadian societies attempt at insinuating violence and fear to hinder Indigenous people relationship with the land. In the struggle against colonial institutions, it is important for Indigenous resistance to regularly upgrade the strategies and tactics of direct action, this will ensure the colonial government is steps behind the set agenda. Strategies are the plans to disrupt colonization and tactics are the direct actions that make up the strategies. Since INM was declared an educational campaign those strategies are sharing and listening to bring about new knowledge to create new strategies and tactics (Alfred *Indigenous Nationhood*). One strategy used during INM was the use of social media, which has helped in facilitating healing and sharing stories. The tactics were to use #IdleNoMore, share content on social media platforms, and to take up space in colonial places.

### *Social Media*

Before INM, the general idea among Western Civilizations assumptions of social movements is that a successful movement depended on the amount of national and even local news coverage (Harper, Leichet 139). It was not the intention for Indigenous social movements to count the number of times they are in newspapers or on television but it reached a greater audience to get the attention from governmental and corporate leaders. During the INM movement the Internet and social media shifted as a tool for Indigenous communities to spread information and organize (Duarte 2017, *Introduction* para. 6). It was as if for a moment the Internet experienced an episode of decolonization, as the INM movement became a hashtag trend.

Over time the connections made through organizing and following for news and coverage on shared interest. Individual social media platforms molded into a community based network and formed cyber spaces that discussed ideas (Duarte 2017, *Introduction* para. 7), for example decolonization and resurgence. Although actions still in large rely on media coverage for mass mobilization; the shift to social media, as seen with INM, allowed coverage by a diverse and culturally sensitive journalist/reporters who focused on community issues that mattered and shared updates relevant to Indigenous communities (Simpson *Idle No More* 298; Duarte 2017, *Introduction* para. 6). News, or any medium reporting on Indigenous issues will remain important as long as it is creating content, is shareable, and puts out reliable information.

Canada has several Indigenous news outlets and their own Indigenous centered channel called the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network (APTN). The APTN keeps Indigenous people updated on the latest issues impacting First Nations (Simpson *Idle No More* 298). One of the reasons Canadian First Nation resistance is more inclusive compared to American Indian resistance is because of APTN and the presence of Indigenous people in the daily lives of non-Indigenous people (Aqukkasuk 2017). Indigenous people have a greater presence in Canada because they have a larger per-capita population when compared to the United States; and they have greater control of their lands in certain areas of Canada (Aqukkasuk 2017).

First Nations resistance carried with it unifying experiences that brought global awareness to Canadian colonization. Marisa Duarte, a Yaqui scholar who has written about the social media phenomenon in INM and other movements in the Americas, notes the impacts of these occurrences stating:

From a scientific perspective, this occurrence means that by December 2012, Indigenous people throughout Aotearoa (New Zealand), Australia, Canada, and the United States—the English-speaking Indigenous world—had established multiple trustworthy and reliable mobile digital social networks across various social media platforms and devices. It meant that an aspect of Indigeneity, as a paradigm of social and political protest, had become digitized, infrastructurally through broadband internet, personally through consumer mobile devices, socially through social media adoption, and discursively through flash mobs, hashtags, and memes. (Duarte 2017, *Introduction* para. 6)

Once the movement took on a life of its own, it was clear that the involved people felt its monumental strength and just as equally learned the limitations of social media. The Internet may have helped in growing the immensity of the movement but along with this outgrowth was the lack of accountability and commitment to the people (Simpson *As We Have Always Done*). Stressing this point, Simpson writes:

At the beginning of Idle No More, I *felt* like I was part of a community. I felt like I was part of something bigger. I remember being excited about being a part of something with a group of like-minded people who wanted to change and were willing to make sacrifices to do so. I worked with people I had met online and never met in person, editing blogs, organizing protests and events. There was a sense of unity that I enjoyed, and even though I knew that politically I might not agree on everything with the organizers I was working with, we could agree on enough to trust each

other and work together on some issues. I thought that I was part of a community, and in a sense I was. And on the other side of that, there was shallowness to my online relationships that would only later reveal itself.

(219)

The influx of internet participants made organizing hard for individuals who were long committed to resistance before INM. Yet, it brought new people to the circle who had little to no experience in organizing and mobilization for the defense of the land and people (Simpson *As We Have Always Done* 220). Additionally, Simpson also points to how algorithms—the formulas that create the social media feed and advertisements on websites—further capitalism by making it present in our lives (Simpson *As we Have Always Done* 221). Thus, the Internet should be used as a tool and should not replace important features needed to strengthen nationhood.

A radical resurgent approach is to keep mobilization out of spaces that support capitalism, as Simpson puts it, “Code and algorithms are controlling our (~~digital~~) lives, and capitalism is controlling code” (*As We Have Always Done* 222). Capitalism and colonization is linked because capitalism is the economic and political system that allows colonization to continue. When framing colonization as the root of the problem it has a greater expanse of history that shows how capitalism was implemented and the strategies used to disposes Indigenous people from their land, through pollution, colonial border, and the concept of privatized land. This is why Indigenous people need to make a solid attempt at getting back to the land and helping local Indigenous people to maintain greater control over their territory. Nonetheless, social media is a force that can bring

about the coverage and dissemination of information that national news coverage has shown to misrepresent.

*The Surveillance of Idle No More*

*The National Post* reported on the security measures to police and gather evidence of Indigenous resistance, which was a cause for concern since efforts were non-violent and the Canadian armed forces and police should have more important matters to address than Indigenous resistance. Based off the direct actions and social media presence of INM it shows that Indigenous resistance maintains a threat to the Canadian government, as it always has (Alfred *Idle No More*). In the *Timeline of Major Events Spanning the Winter We Danced*, the article by the National Post reported on the security measures, “... That Aboriginal Affairs and the Canadian Security Intelligence Service accumulated over 1,200 pages of records on Idle No More, including information about over 439 rallies and protests during the winter of 2012-2013” (Kino-nda-niimi 408). The threat is having Indigenous people gathering with the intent to resist colonization and this has the power bring the idea of decolonization on a mass level (Alfred *Wasase* 20,21, 22, 25). The educational campaign of INM has that power to dismantle concepts that allows the Canadian colonial narrative to be embraced by their citizens. Embedded in that colonial narrative are the violence and misguided assumptions of Indigenous people, this continues settler-colonialism.

During the winter of 2012-2013, there was a large amount of groups that were formed on social media and supported INM. In the book, *The Winter We Danced*, the Timeline states, “Idle No More organizer Alex Wilson tells CBC that there are approximately 400 regional ally groups formed since Idle No More started and a database

of 125,000 people” (Kino-nda-niimi, 409). Additionally, by December 21, 2012, on the Internet there were 36,000 hashtags, using *#IdleNoMore* across North America and from December 23-29, 2012 there were approximately 144,000 tweets on twitter (Kino-nda-niimi 395). The Twitter and Facebook data shows the mobilizing capacity of social media. Yet, as explained by Simpson, “Every tweet, Facebook post, blog post, Instagram photo, YouTube video, and e-mail was sent during Idle No More made the largest corporations in the world, corporations controlled by white men with a vested interest in settler colonialism, more money to reinforce the system of settler colonialism,” and furthermore, “They were also read, monitored, collected, and surveyed by the segment of Canadian society that hates us, and they used these to try and hurt us” (*As We Have Always Done* 222). Participating on social media for many organizers is a love and hate relationship because as much convenient it just as equally lacks depth. As surveillance is an issue for Indigenous resistance organizers must seek other methods of communication. Even so, the stories that came out of INM is clear evidence that the movement brought Indigenous communities and their allies together and this was enough to worry the Canadian settler state.

The INM movement brought out greater public understanding about: neglected treaties; missing and murdered Indigenous women; the passage and effect of Bill C-45; the continued environmental destruction of ecosystems, especially near First Nations; the induction of corrupt leadership in Tribal Council; hyper-consumerism; and how to implement indigeneity in an over colonized world. The educational strategies in movements, along with its life threatening action of the hunger strike received a considerable amount of support from both Indigenous peoples and Canadian settlers

(Coulthard *#Idlenomore* 36). The actions that were all documented and can be found by simply researching Idle No More, disrupted capitalism in highly publicized places around the world and during the busiest times of consumerism, the holidays. Globally, people were committed to being “idle no more” and they were gaining knowledge of the Canadian government's thirst for land and resources.

After the cooptation of the INM movement on January 11, issues that mobilized the most support gained nationwide attention after the movement died down. Two examples are the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women(MMIW), and land and water protectors (The Kino-nda-niimi 23). INM emphasized narratives regarding land and people, and so it became easier, besides necessary, to see the connection between violence targeting people and violence targeting the land (Simpson *As We Have Always Done* 87-88). The MMIW movement raised tough discussions centering on women rights, especially those pertaining to Indigenous women, and the shifts from matrilineal to patrilineal societies within some Indigenous nations (Palmater *Beyond Blood* 18, 19).

The issue of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women the Royal Canadian Mounted Police— the federal and national police— reports that from the year 1980-2012 there have been over a thousand missing and murdered Indigenous women, making death triggered violence eight times more likely (Lavell-Harvard, Brant 2). Another statistic from the Amnesty International, indicates that “Indigenous women between the ages of twenty-five and forty-four with Indian status are five times more likely than other woman of the same age to die from violence” (35). The essential qualities of colonization— dispossession and complete transformation through violent measures— and the inherent features of Indigenous women’s matrilineal powers— creating a nurturing foundation

through the resources provided— have generated systematic tolerance of violence towards Indigenous women. In fact, colonization depends on the erasure of Indigenous matrilineal power to continue the control and destruction of land.



## Chapter 3

### INDIGENOUS INTELLECTUAL HISTORY OF INM AND ITS ROLE IN THE HISTORY OF INDIGENOUS RESISTANCE

Simpson, Alfred, and Coulthard made intellectual contributions to the INM movement with theoretical frameworks that made their research relevant to Indigenous people and their allies. Their work combined, upheld principles of decolonization and resurgence as an alternative to Indigenous resistance because it placed the attention and focus on constructing Indigenous nationhood using traditional principles and values that Canadian colonization has undermined. The area most focused on when seeking solutions to First Nations issues with poverty and health is pressuring Canada to uphold their promises to First Nations, which has done little good and is obvious Canada does not care (Simpson *As We Have Always Done* 222).

It took time for the published material to surface in regards to the movement. *The Winter We Danced*, edited by Kino-nda-niimi Collective, came out in 2014, a year after the movement. This edited volume included over a hundred written works and visual arts created during the movement. The contributors of the book included Simpson, Alfred, and Coulthard, a couple of the INM founders, and prominent First Nation public figures that were all involved with the movement. The articles, poetry, and artwork throughout the book captured the right attitude and emotions that was collectively experienced during the INM movement.

Along with serving as the editor Leanne Simpson contributed five pieces to the edited book. Her work on resurgence used Indigenous knowledge from her community and elders along with other Indigenous scholars, such as Taiaiake Alfred. She is a Michi

Saagiig Nishnaabeg from Alderville First Nation. Simpson has earned her Ph.D. at the University Manitoba in Zoology, Anthropology, and Native Studies in 1999 (*Restoring Nationhood*). She currently teaches at Trent University in their doctoral program in Indigenous Studies. She also is at the Dechinta Center for Research and Learning with Glen Coulthard. Coulthard and Simpson have worked together since 2001 when she was his professor at the University of Victoria in the Indigenous Governance Program (*Restoring Nationhood*). For twenty years she has built upon Indigenous land-based education while working alongside elders and traditional people (*Restoring Nationhood* 1:30). Above all, she is a mother and is an example of an Indigenous scholar working tirelessly to reverse the effects of colonization. All three scholars have children of their own, and that has shaped the way they have gone about their research.

I include Taiaiake Alfred's research on Indigenous Nationhood that advanced the concept of decolonization. His interpretation to decolonization allowed it to be applied to Indigenous people through his introduction of resurgence, evident in, *Wasase*, published in 2005. Read throughout the world, this book has shaped Indigenous studies through his critique on tribal leaderships who have been coopted, as seen in *Peace, Power, Righteousness*. He also stresses that ceremonies and traditional roles still have relevance, he shows this with his use of the Condolence ceremony in *Peace, Power, Righteousness* (8,9) and the ancient Rotinoshonni ritual of *Wasase* (19). Because his books have been read globally and have provided critical analysis to Indigenous study courses, his research, along with those of other intellectuals, provide a critical role for the educational focused movement. Alfred is from the Kahnawake Mohawk Nation and is a professor for the Indigenous Governance program at the University of Victoria, which he has taken the

lead in starting up. He obtained his Ph.D. from Cornell University in comparative politics and political theory and for over thirty years has consulted on land and governance for Indigenous nations. Alfred uses his institutional experience as an opportunity to provide insight into colonization and to advocate a return to land and tradition as a remedy to colonization (Alfred *Peace, Power, Righteousness* 3).

Lastly, Glen Coulthard, uses the work of radical political and social theorist to understand the current *politics of recognition*. With a political background grounded in radical thought, he understands the importance and disruptive qualities of emotional reactions. His book, *Red Skin, White Mask*, came out a year after the onset of the INM movement, which allowed him to cover INM in his last chapter. He uses the concept of radical resurgent using grounded normativity, which is the refusal to be recognized by the Canadian state (*Red Skins, White Masks*). A Dene from the Yellowknives First Nation, Coulthard obtained his Ph.D. from the Indigenous Governance Program at the University of Victoria. He is currently an associate professor at the First Nations & Indigenous Studies and the Department of Political Science at the University of British Columbia.

Considered together, Simpson, Alfred, and Coulthard provide a comprehensive overview of colonization and its impact on Indigenous peoples by framing the research with in decolonial and resurgent theories. They all use the concept of decolonization, though in different ways, but it promotes a shifting away from colonial structures and institutions (Simpson *Dancing on Our Turtles Back*; Alfred *Wasase* 35; Coulthard *Red Skin, White Masks*). They also all use resurgence, also in different ways, still getting back to the land is crucial as a form of direct action. We will discuss these difference in greater detail in the sections on decolonization and resurgence.

The role of Indigenous scholars who are teaching courses that critical analyze colonization and settler-colonialism foster safe spaces, by supporting critical analysis and conversations. The role of a scholar serves an important purpose for social movements and Indigenous resistance by disseminating information and frameworks that can be applied outside of the classroom atmosphere, by organizing with the intention of using the theories learned in the classroom setting. Simpson, Alfred, and Coulthard advances resurgence as a concept because the end goal is to reflect an Indigenous identity grounded in Indigenous epistemology, ontology, and axiology. The comprehensive analysis of decolonization and resurgence does not leave the audience with prescribed set rules on how to go about the process of change. Now with storytelling, it provides a starting point for the Indigenous nations wanting to reassert their Indigenous nationhood as it creates an opportunity to wonder how their ancestors interpreted their lived experiences.

Not having the technique to communicate effectively has made Indigenous nations vulnerable since the Canadian government understood there will be cultural difference in interpretations. This deployed the politics of interpretation, the art of construing the interpretation of text to manipulate the system to work in ones favor, which is why, as Simpson states, “We need to be able to articulate in a clear manner our visions for the future, for living as *Indigenous Peoples* in contemporary times” (Simpson *Dancing on Our Turtles Back*). Terms can employ certain agendas and depending on who that agenda is working against there will be cultural differences which can effect someone’s messaging. The complication is the misunderstanding of terminologies because of the extreme difference in the ontological frameworks between Settler-colonialist and Indigenous nations and “only with a thorough knowledge of the

background and opposing ideologies of each side could one hope to understand” each other (Cardinal 8). The need to be coherent in acts of resistance is always the goal but it has not been given much thought in how that is achieved, especially when the colonizer controls the interpretation of certain words, “people who can shape ideas, translate, and create language will be essential to the process of decolonization” (Alfred *Peace, Power, Righteousness* 178). Seen with INM was the generation that was able to communicate to both Indigenous grassroots communities and to Canadian settler-society.

On both a local to individual level terms may mean the same thing but could have different reaction to its use, for example the term “colonization.” Terms are thought to be taken at face value and interpreted based on individual perception, which are often loaded with negative or positive connotations that make communication difficult, this must be considered when working with different communities (Cardinal 8, 16, 17, 18).

Indigenous intellectuals and organizers can help communities navigate these conversations by acting as a mediator and providing space when necessary (Cardinal 17).

An alternative to fusing together new words to use in anti-colonial theory, is returning to our Indigenous languages that describe how our ancestors described life. Relearning and incorporating Indigenous language will reassert nationhood and create an understanding of the world through the lens of their ancestors. Additionally, through the access and the use of language in everyday discourse this will reassert power over the traditional territories (Simpson *PKOLS*) because language links us to past ancestors and the land. It is a matter of connecting and asking fluent speakers what words best describe resistance, decolonization, and resurgence (Simpson *PKOLS*; *Dancing On Our Turtle’s Back*). By choosing to use the terms of the colonizer, it will continue to create confusion

despite reaching a greater audience. When using such terms, like sovereignty, it still denotes colonial principles of reigning order, which implies oppressive forms of control. The community has everything it needs to start resurgence, rhetoric on decolonization, elders, youth, and land. This matters because forming connections across generations using traditional principles and values with strengthen Indigenous nationhood.

Intellectuals are great storytellers. Intellectuals as storytellers have fulfilled the role of telling the history of systemic oppression, something all have successfully executed. For one, Indigenous scholars have to navigate their way through the academy, which in many ways serves as a tool of colonization (Mihsuah, Wilson 5), which is why many scholars have put in the work in decolonizing methodologies. During educational pursuits, Indigenous people have proven resiliency and success in various fields pursued, above all they still held onto their Indigenous identity (Martinez, ix-x). Expressing why the academy is “adamantly and aggressively opposed to Indigenous ways,” will limit its support for indigenizing the academy, Alfred states: “Our experiences in universities reflect the tensions and dynamics of our relationships as Indigenous peoples interacting with people and institutions in society as a whole: an existence of constant and pervasive struggle to resist assimilation to the values and culture of the larger society” (Alfred *Warrior Scholarship* 88). He believes that assimilation remains the goal in order for Canada to hold a position of power in terms of landholdings. That is why Indigenous communities and people must support fields and programs such as Indigenous Governance, Dechinta Bush University, and the numerous Indigenous Studies and American Indian Studies; because with persistence from Indigenous people within

institutions they can go “from an agent of colonialism to a center of decolonization” (Mihesuah, Wilson 5).

It might seem limiting the discussion to only Simpson, Alfred, and Coulthard is problematic given the influences of Vine Deloria Jr., Elizabeth Cook-Lynn, and other scholars. However, I selected them because they provide a lens for understanding resistance, decolonization, and resurgence. In addition, they participated in the INM movement. By focusing on the work of Simpson, Alfred, and Coulthard, it can be argued that they serve as a starting point for people who are new to the concepts of decolonization and resurgence.

#### *INM Analysis, Resistance; Decolonization, and Resurgence*

Here I include the analysis of the INM movement from the perspectives of Simpson, Alfred, and Coulthard. *The Winter We Danced*, a collection of essays that offer an informative account of the INM events and the emotional and spiritual empowerment experienced by its participants, was released in 2014. The book honors the people that made up the INM movement and the contributors, which includes storytellers and artist (Kino-nda-niimi 439). The editors of *The Winter We Danced*, Leanne Simpson, Tanya Kappo, Wanda Nanibush, Hayden King, and Niigaanwewidam James Sinclair; together they made up the Kino-nda-niimi Collective that put the book together (439). Alongside the collective’s work on the book, Sinclair organized conversations that involved many of the editors, called “Niigaan: In Conversation.” The collective ensured they involved people from different backgrounds in the book, “Indigenous and non-Indigenous thinkers, organizers, leaders, artists, and advocated” as long as they were connected with their communities/homelands (Kino-nda-niimi 26).

The editors structured the book by presenting it in a manner that honored Indigenous people because it reflected values that was more intent on pushing for conversations and centering the voices of the INM participants (Kino-nda-niimi 25). This of course capitalized on my stance to show the importance of Indigenous intellectuals in creating content using resistance, decolonization, and resurgence in making sense of the modern times. It shows that books do not have to be constrained to a set standard and can reflect Indigenous practices and values.

In the book, INM became an opportunity to envision a future because the resistance affirmed that many Indigenous people do not want to assimilate into Canadian society as citizens of the state. The Kino-nda-niimi Collective stated, “The spirit and the work of the winter we danced continues, like it always has, into the future” (26). The INM movement, as mentioned, welcomed and encouraged conversations (Coulthard *Red Skin, White Masks*) and is why I respect a book that reflects those same values. This book fits into my thesis because embedded in the articles are ideas of decolonization and resurgence; additionally, Simpson, Alfred, and Coulthard all have articles within.

The collective organized the combined shared experiences to create a cohesive narrative that places resistance as a historical account within the vast history of Indigenous resistance to Canadian colonization (Kino-nda-niimi 25-26). I see the collectives’ work as advancing the role of the intellectual to not only produce content/knowledge but to share the work of others, which yielded greater depth of knowledge, which otherwise would not have happened.

The book was released not long after the movement, this strategy of capturing the moment as soon as possible helps in producing more content. The collection of voices



and art shows who the editors value and also reflects the message they wish to convey, which is that INM contributed greatly to the greater historical context of Indigenous resistance. The space given to Simpson, Alfred, and Coulthard shows their research holds value in the INM movement.

Coulthard's article, "#IdleNoMore in Historical Context," is seen in the first section to share a brief history of Indigenous resistance leading up to INM (32-37). It is significant to decolonization because he connects the resistance of previous Indigenous led direct actions to the political agenda of termination through connecting INM to the 1969 "White Papers" that was determined make citizens of Indigenous peoples. This is significant because Coulthard touches on the shift from more colonial approaches to colonization versus subtle means of inclusion through the "politics of recognition." This connects to INM because Bill C-45 and the other bills sought to weaken First Nations rights by altering the legal binding document, the Indian Act.

Alfred's first article is co-authored with Toby Rollo, "Resetting and Restoring the Relationship Between Indigenous Peoples and Canada," which has a list of recommendations for the Canadian government (314-316). When the article was first created it was used as a handout at INM rallies and events (316). While conducting acts of resistance it was helpful to have handouts to share with the public on what the INM movement was about.

His second article, "Idle No More and Indigenous Nationhood," argues that Indigenous people "need to focus our activism on the root of the problem facing our people collectively: our collective dispossession and misrepresentation as Indigenous peoples" (348). What he means is that activism must infiltrate colonial spaces with

Indigenous nationhood and Indigenous people must get back to the land (349). Alfred states, “When we as Indigenous people have a political agenda that’s consistent with our Original Teachings – to have a respectful relationship with the land and the natural environment and to have a respectful relationship among all of the nations that share this land” (347), this is moving towards resurgence because when settlers first arrived our ancestors were willing to share space. The Canadian governments abusive and colonial nature has hindered Indigenous people ability to put *original teachings* into practice because colonization has affected many areas that leaves individuals questioning everything. Decolonization frameworks resurrects the power that was being controlled by colonization.

Simpson contributed two interviews and three articles to the edited volume. The article, “The PKOLS Reclamation: Saturating Our Land with Stories,” legitimizes the need to research the names of traditional places and to use them in every possible way (363). Simpson explains why this form of action is important, “Our place names are holders of story, history, teachings, events –our collective and individual intimate connections and interaction with place” (*PKOLS* 360). Due to colonization of land, it has disrupted the way Indigenous people connect to the traditional territory, through the complete transformation of space, thus changing practically every aspect of life. This action of getting back to the land is for anyone in the community and is where intellectuals can help facilitate the process by advocating for traditional education.

In “Fish Broth & Fasting,” Simpson defend Chief Spence’s hunger strike by arguing that many Indigenous People and communities faced with poverty do not have the luxury of going on a diet (154). Colonization has limited Indigenous peoples’ access

to their traditional means of preparing their food through the illegalizing of hunting and gathering and so choosing to go on a hunger strike is not attempt to go on a diet, which is a demonstration of selfish rhetoric (Simpson *Fish Broth; As We Have Always Done* 5). Canadian's may have made a mockery of the fast/hunger strike, whereas, much of Indigenous community knew it was a sacrifice and ceremony (Simpson *Fish Broth*). Due to the heavy scrutiny that Chief Spence received from the media it was important to have the people of INM support her (Simpson *Fish Broth* 155).

In her last article, "Idle No More: Where the Mainstream Media Went Wrong," Simpson calls attention to mainstream media's misrepresentation and incompetence on reporting on Indigenous issues (294-300). Simpson's discussion shows how colonization continues through misrepresentation, because mainstream media lacks the understanding to properly report on Indigenous peoples' issues. The problem of misrepresentation is made worse when we consider that Indigenous peoples struggle to get accurate reporting (295). Here resurgence, not needing the justification of the colonial state, is presented in a subtle manner to place reporting into the hands of the community, Simpson states, "People within the movement have also engaged in an extensive self-representation media campaign as an alternative to the mainstream press" (298). This emphasizes Simpson responds to the problem of misrepresentation by taking on the responsibility of reporting accurately on Indigenous peoples and issues (295).

Her reporting efforts are represented in two interviews included in *The Winter We Danced*: "'I have waited 40 years for this. Keep it going and don't stop!': An Interview with Siku Allooooloo" (193) and "Seeing Strength, Beauty & Resilience in Ourselves: An Interview with Eugene Boulanger (316). In both interviews Simpson asks the

interviewees about their involvement with the movement. This was to put her words into action and activated her role as a researcher. In her interview she reported on the meaning and significance of INM for the two organizers; Siku Allooloo and Eugene Boulanger. Often happening in movements is that organizers usually do not get an opportunity to speak on the work they do and to have a scholar interview these two organizers was able to capture the reason why they do the selfless task of organizing space.

There are other works from Simpson, Alfred, and Coulthard that are not included in the edited volume, *The Winter We Danced*. Coulthard also wrote about the INM movement in his book, *Red Skin, White Masks*, which came out in 2014. He prioritizes the works of Simpson and Alfred when discussing resurgence because he states, “Idle No More offers a productive case study against which to explore what a resurgent Indigenous politics might look like on the ground” (*Red Skin, White Masks*). Throughout the book, he makes a strong case as to how the “politics of recognition” is used to uphold settler colonialism and how INM continues the resistance for liberation.

The resistance of Indigenous ancestors ensured the survival of generations and to recognize their hard work calls for a celebration and an affirmation of our self-worth (Coulthard *Red Skin, White Mask*). Those sacrifices kept generations of us alive, for some relatives, their only form of resistance was trying to exist in a society that depended on the erasure of Indigeneity. Simpson states, “For Nishnaabeg thinkers, resistance and resurgence are not only our response to colonialism, they are our only responsibility in the face of colonialism” (Simpson *Dancing on our Turtles Back*). As long as resistance is present there will be a need for decolonization and resurgence; and, fortunately with INM many are rising up to the issues.



## Chapter 4

### DECOLONIZATION AS A PROCESS TO FUNCTION

The contributions of Simpson, Taiaiake, and Coulthard offer an alternative approach to decolonization with focusing on the use of resurgence. In contrast, most political scientist has discussed decolonization and its literal form, which is to expel the colonizer from the land (Alfred *Peace, Power, Righteousness* 26). Decolonization calls for “a total commitment to the challenge of regenerating our indigeneity, to rootedness in indigenous cultures, to a fundamental commitment to the centrality of our truths,” for this to happen what he request is to “require the reader to challenge critically all of his or her artificial and emotional attachments to the oppressive colonial myths and symbols that we have come to know as our culture” (Alfred *Wasase* 33). Decolonization is the dismantling of the colonial agenda inflicted on Indigenous communities, which becomes the dispossession of Indigenous peoples from homelands.

Decolonization is a personal process that strives to interject colonization with Indigenous ways of living and thinking. Decolonization will look differently to everyone because of how colonization has uniquely affected us all. Simpson has written about the disruptive qualities of decolonization, “Indigenous thoughts can only be learned through the personal; this is because our greatest influence is on ourselves, and because living in a good way is an incredible disruption of the colonial meta-narrative in and of itself” (*Dancing on our Turtles Back*). Apart of the healing process of decolonization is understanding how important our existence is and situating ourselves back into the community rather than seeing ourselves as an individual. As shifting the outlook on life and connecting our Indigenous roots, once we start demonstrating the teachings that

reflect our biological makeup (Simpson *Dancing on our Turtles Back*), we will understand what living a good life truly means.

In each of their work, decolonization is achieved by centering their individual nation to explain their experiences under Canadian colonization, the dispossession of Indigenous people from land and traditional structures, for example, Simpson and Alfred use their language, stories, and ceremonies. Being from the community means the members possess knowledge that would otherwise take some outsider years, if ever to gain the same. With that said, it is vital to approach Indigenous communities with respect and the openness to learn about their experiences with colonization.

Decolonization provides the observational analytical tools for communities resisting colonization and/or considering Indigenous approaches to governance. In order for decolonization to move beyond theory it must address “the multifarious ways in which capitalism, patriarchy, white supremacy, and the totalizing character of state power interact with one another to form the constellation of power relations that sustain colonial patterns of behavior, structures, and relationships” (Coulthard *Red Skin, White Masks*). This would mean taking conversations on decolonization and resurgence out of the classroom and finding its way back to the land, whether urban or rural. Decolonization becomes a political act, living as an Indigenous person is a political act and a form of resistance (Simpson *As We Have Always Done* 41, 42, 43). With its political grounding notion, Alfred’s criticism of decolonization, redirected its meaning to make it more applicable for Indigenous nations. He writes

Too many of these traditionalist, it seems that, so far, all the attention and energy has been directed at the cumbersome and expensive process of

decolonization—the mechanics of removing ourselves from direct state control and the legal and political struggle to gain recognition of an indigenous governing authority. Almost no attention has been made to the end goals of the struggle. (*Peace, Power, Righteousness* 26)

Up until Alfred's critical response to the term, decolonization was framed within Western theory and thus Indigenous people did not see the need for it. Hokulani K. Aikau, professor at the University of Utah, questions the effectiveness of decolonization because she wonders if Indigenous people would replicate colonial structures if the colonizers were to ever leave (Aikau, et. al. 88). Instead of decolonization, one of Aikau's principles for the program is to work alongside the community, "scholarship must do more than critique structures of power such as settler colonialism from the classroom or the academy, but must actively engage with community" (Aikau, et. al. 87). As explained, communities will find themselves in different levels of these two ideas, decolonization and resurgence. Some may find decolonization as not necessary because they have a good understanding of their position within colonization. The flaws seen in the process of decolonization is not enough to dismiss the concept because it uproots colonization by connecting Indigenous people back to their roots (Coulthard *Red Skin, White Mask*). Decolonization disrupts colonization by questioning people's relationship to colonialism and how oppressive structures are upheld through the participation inherent in daily living on unceded occupied territory.

Canada's legacy of colonization is why intellectuals provide substantially to the mobilization of resistance, decolonization, and resurgence. To build upon collective



experiences, “This is why the larger critical Indigenous intellectual community is important. The contestation of imperial domination becomes our collective and individual starting point, and the lens through which to view our own liberation,” states Simpson (Simpson *Dancing on our Turtles Back*). As suggested with a decolonial framework liberation is possible as long as Indigenous people keep on creating alternatives that construct their personal and individualized instruction on decolonization. According to scholar and activist, Angela Waziyatawin Wilson, “decolonization and empowerment must be distinct to us and developed from the guiding principles that allowed us to live a sustainable existence for thousands of years” (Wilson *Reclaiming Our Humanity* 71). Wilson uses Alfred’s research to discuss the role of scholars who use an Indigenous intelligentsia approach to communicate the needs of Indigenous communities. This goes into her claim that what is needed are “Native academics with intellectual strength...and work toward the recovery of Indigenous traditions as part of our scholarly agenda and commitment to tribal communities” (72). This is decolonial in nature because when intellectuals use Indigenous knowledge as apart of their research project there is a sense of liberation.

To want revolutionary change, decolonization as a process will critically evaluate, analyze, and take the necessary steps to remove colonization, that is warrior scholarship (Alfred *Wasase* 83, 84; and *Warrior Scholarship*). As if to remove a tumor, infection, or to restore balance by detoxing, there must be a proper procedure to recover what has systematically been taken away from First Nations. Getting to the root of liberation for Indigenous people is living on the land without the threat of police, corporations, and violent predator’s; this will happen once decolonization becomes a well articulated goal

for Indigenous people and to have the settler allies support the goal and taking it back to their settler circles. Indigenous communities remain targets for mega-projects destroying their land through extraction and pollution, despite the awareness INM brought, that is why it is crucial to maintain the pressure to stop destruction. Conversations on decolonization welcomes a diverse audience and it be great if mobilization went in the direction to where settler allies can work on decolonizing their country's colonial structures and Indigenous people and land/water defenders can take to the land to provide frontline defense through a resurgent process.

### *From Decolonization to Resurgence*

When reading research that uses Indigenous language there is a sense of liberation, this is what Simpson eloquently does in her research. Just like Alfred using ceremony in his books, *Wasase* and *Peace, Power, Righteousness*. Both of these elements are acts of resurgence as it contextualizes Indigenous community's modern existence within Indigenous processes. It is taking Indigenous knowledge and applying it to modern existence, this takes courage because colonization has placed Indigenous people in this temporal living, the idea of time going in a linear fashion. What ends up happening, is the lack of connection to Indigenous culture and land produces this feeling that forgets our power and ability to declare what is and is not sacred. Even through treaty relationships and other negotiations, leadership has never and can ever, surrender our individual power to self-determination and our inherent rights as Indigenous peoples. Especially for mothers, sisters, and aunties who are responsible for maintaining the foundation within many Indigenous nations. When this happens, it makes it harder for us to create new ceremonies, new songs, new meaning to oral stories, new connections to

place. As soon as we start to learn traditional oral stories as well as stories of surviving colonization, Indigenous nations will work towards the resurrection of Indigenous nationhood

Liberation will take form when oral stories and Indigenous languages are used to advance Indigenous theory. The telling and retelling of stories reveal embedded lessons that ancestors knew was important to pass down and apply to everyday experiences, even in modern times. Simpson shares several stories on Indigenous resistance, mobilization, and collective thought in *Niimtoowaad Mikinaag Gijiying Bakonaan (Dancing on Our Turtle's Back): Aandisokaanan and Resurgence*. In one section of the chapter, she introduces Nanabush the trickster to bring to light strategies for the movement, the strategies include diagnosing, revealing the problem, and thinking strategically to create a plan (Simpson *Dancing on Our Turtles Back*). Even though the story does not verbally state those three strategies, Simpson, being knowledgeable in Nishnaabeg stories is able to discern those qualities and apply it to her research. This is resurgence because she is not reacting to colonization but pulling theories and ideas from traditional stories to approach problem solving.

Her expertise then is able to advance resurgence for her community and family because they can relate to it through stories and language; this is where resurgence becomes involved as a process to revive Indigenous nationhood. One process is purging the colonial mentality and the next involves replenishing the void with Indigenous theory that makes sense to the community. Decolonization and resurgence would mean nothing if the people could not relate to the word (Simpson *Dancing on Our Turtles Back*).

Rhetoric and story time may not create direct action to colonization, but it facilitates and motivates agents of change by prioritizing Indigenous theory. Simpson explains, “Our theory in its most basic form is simply and explanation for why we do the things we do” (*Dancing On Our Turtles Back*). Indigenous research prioritizes ethical principles while providing a theoretical analysis that fits the individual nation or audience since each nation is different the process to gather empirical evidence will be different. INM being an educational movement would make sense to prioritize the facilitation of knowledge production that is inherently Indigenous, for example oral traditions.

For most civilizations education is essential in shaping members of a society, who become structured through cultural protocols, roles, and responsibilities that uphold the nation. Stories were the preferred method of acquiring knowledge because they could be applied to varying situations depending on need (Simpson *Dancing On Our Turtles Back*; Kovach 94). Rather than offering unsolicited advice and input, a better method was to share a story to indirectly advise someone on certain tactics, sharing a story was seen as offering a gift (Simpson *Dancing On Our Turtles Back*; Sinclair 273). Simpson recognizes that, traditionally, her people constructed knowledge through years of listening, sharing stories, and partaking in the actions that created experiential living (Simpson *Dancing On Our Turtles Back*). INM showed that, for Indigenous people, oral stories remain important to acquiring knowledge.

Resurgence compliments decolonization, because a filtration system will detect colonization, so when the community goes through the visioning process, colonization is as little of a factor as possible, that it what resurgence entails. Simpson, in *Dancing on our Turtles Back*, lays outs and applies resurgence much like her ancestors always have,

“getting up and creating while living in an Indigenous world” (Simpson *IRAR Symposium*). Now that conversations are happening, direct action is more inclusive of *resurgence* and it places Indigenous bodies back on the land. Partaking in action is difficult since the risks can hurt future strategies (Alfred *Wasase* 51). Continuing to organize with little results over the years can lead to burnout and resource depletion for having to operate in a system that is entrenched with colonial violence. That is why, Alfred says, “This means finding a theoretical logic that rejects violence as a means of liberation” (*Wasase* 51). Whereas resurgence is that means.

Connecting with the land is most useful if there is a solid attempt at cultural reclamation. The term that intellectuals, such as Coulthard and Simpson, have used to describe radical resurgent process is *grounded normativity*, which is the place-based foundation to structure our lives in relation to the world (Coulthard *Red Skin, White Mask*). Simpson insist that, “The first tenet then of radical resurgent organizing is a refusal of state recognition as an organizing platform and mechanism for dismantling the systems of colonial domination” (*As We Have Always Done* 176). Getting to that point of refusing to recognize state control can be a hard process, yet very liberating for the mind.

The Canadian colonial government agenda of dealing with “the Indian Problem” views the presence of Indigenous peoples as an obstacle to overcome, which results in the erasure of Indigenous thoughts and modes of everyday living. So, why not organize with the intention of erasing colonial modes of recognition. Simpson leads us to the next point and that is, “the second tenet requires us to refuse the state’s framing of the issues we organize around, and respond to and re-embed these issues within Indigenous political contexts and realities and within the place of productive refusal as a mechanism of

building unity within the struggle” (176). This of course is a lot easier to say, however it is the work that needs to be done, as Simpson states.

For countless generations, Nishnaabeg children grew up within the milieu of Nishnaabewin, not the institutions of school. Many of our children still do, thanks to parents, grandparents, and communities. Like governance and leadership and every other aspect of reciprocated life, education come from the roots up. It comes from being enveloped by land...You can't graduate from Nishnaabewin; it is a gift to be practiced and reproduced. And while each individual must have the skills and knowledge to ensure their own safety, survival, and prosperity in both the physical and spiritual realm, their existence is ultimately dependent upon intimate relationships of reciprocity, humility, honesty, and respect with all elements of creation, including plants and animals. (Simpson *As We Have Always Done* 154)

Many nations have a concept that reminds them to strive for a form of living that reflects the greatest qualities, values, and principles (Simpson *Dancing On Our Turtle's Back*). Examples are, to *walk in beauty* as the Dine would say or *mino bimaadiziwin* for the Anishinaabe, which translates to *the good life* (Simpson *Dancing On Our Turtle's Back*).

These concepts tie people to their communities and foster a shared sense of identity. Resurgence as a process was even encouraged by the late George Manuel, “The fastest way to bring about change among oppressed people is to put the decision –making authority, and the economic resources that go with it, into their own hands. Only then will there be a line clearly drawn between the evils of external control and our own normal

human errors” (George Manuel 246). Leanne Simpson states, “...in order to have a positive identity we have to be living in ways that illuminate that identity,” and that is why resurgence is the necessary step after decolonization (Simpson *Dancing on our Turtle’s Back*). Implementing processes and concepts that have sustained Indigenous nations for longer than thousands of years is a power that can only be achievable on a community level through leaders who embrace resistance and use decolonization, resurgence, storytelling, community-based research, and strategic tactics to further *the good life*.

## Chapter 5

### RESURGENCE AS A PROCESS OF LIBERATION

Resurgence as a process will require a lot more energy in the form of empowerment and using brainpower to think beyond temporal grounds in order to activate knowledge that is held within the land and the reiteration of Indigenous theory (stories, ceremonies, songs). This energy as Simpson describes, advocates for a full immersion such as placing our bodies on the land and developing a relationship with elders that would give us their trust in sharing stories, or theory (Kovach 97; Simpson *Dancing On Our Turtle's Back*). Stories that reveal how Indigenous nations have survived several attempts at near extinction (*Dancing On Our Turtle's Back*) this becomes the responsibility of intellectuals who have put in the work to ensure theories are applicable as “the fundamental goal of the indigenous warrior: to live life as an act of indigeneity” (Alfred *Wasase* 45). When learning how Indigenous people have survived worlds, empower people to imagine ways to continue living, Simpson finds this in her people's creation stories, “the processes of mobilization or migration in relation to colonialism, decolonization and resurgence, is communicated through the Seven Fires Prophecy” (*Dancing on our Turtles Back*). With this in mind Simpson mentions that, “resurgence is our original instruction,” and decolonization is ensuring we get there (Simpson *Dancing on our Turtles Back*). If the goal is Indigenous in nature, then it is vital to include everyone within the nation.

The mobilization of returning to “ourselves” would require further investigation in how Indigenous people should live, and it would have to involve ways of becoming self-sufficient with the land. *Biskaabiiyang* is how the Nishnaabeg in Simpson's territory



describe decolonization (*Dancing On Our Turtle's back*). The term, Simpson's use to describe decolonization, which actually translations mean, "to look back," and it describes the process "to return to ourselves," are used to conjure a visual of what not to be in order to *return to ourselves* (Simpson, "*Dancing on our Turtles Back*," 42). In the process of resurgence, the efforts of learning the language need to find ways to use it in everyday context. Using the language serves as a vehicle to ensure diversity of thoughts and worldviews that can aid in rebuilding and healing communities (Simpson *Dancing On Our Turtle's Back*). Promoting each member of society to be a creator of art and thought will provide the community with a large expansion and depth in many fields. The following excerpt by Simpson provides a better explanation on decolonization as she describes Biskaabiiyang. It is...

...the constant continual evaluation of colonialism within both individuals and communities. It also encompasses a visioning process where we create new and just realities in which our ways of being can flourish. Nonetheless, it is not just a visioning process. We must act to create those spaces...even if those spaces only exist for fragments of time. (Simpson *Dancing on our Turtles Back* 45)

When process, like decolonization, is framed using Indigenous language the individuals learns theory, how think critically, and strengthen the ability to engage in observational analysis (Simpson *Dancing On Our Turtle's Back*). The term is tied to ancestors, stories, land, and the livelihood of Simpson's people, and so, it is something the community could incorporate. Dakota Scholar Waziyatawin Angela Wilson states, "as Indigenous

scholars it is our responsibility to bring communities useful ways of talking about experiences and co-creating a culture of resistance based both on the recovery of Indigenous knowledge and traditional means of resistance as well as the theoretical frameworks and language from outside of our cultures that can assist us in our struggle” (Wilson *Remember This!* 14). By using our Indigenous language to describe current situations, we are choosing a life that speaks to our innate being as well as utilizing knowledge that links back to the ancestors. Picking up on language will further resurgence, and thus people should consider ways to relate language and culture to our modern existence.

An often misconception of *returning to ourselves*, is that it means living without material items or the comforts of modern day civilization. When realizing Indigenous resurgence, the goal is not to live pre-colonial lives, but rather recreate the self with tools, technology, and resources available (Simpson *Dancing on our Turtles Back*). To be clear, we still have to evaluate the use of such tools (Simpson *As We Have Always Done* ), still we need to acknowledge where electricity comes from and wonder what is the expense of our use of it. Endless scrolling on Facebook and posting senseless content contributes minimally to realizing our liberation. Instead one could use the internet in ways that would foster a healthy and safe structure for the community, even meme’s (pictures that portray meaning through text and interpretation) can provide structure but bringing attention by calling out the issues and assimilation. The goal does not change when we partake in daily living, though it may make participation difficult. For example, celebrating the holiday known as Thanksgiving, which is celebrated in October for Canadians. As yummy and delicious the holiday may be, the narrative of the holiday

favors settler colonialism. Though there have been several attempts at decolonizing the movement such as calling it Thanks-Taking, sharing the correct narrative of its origins, abstaining from the celebration, and positing the frustration on social media.

The rhetoric on resurgence that came from the INM movement even if its process was not supported by the general public, was embraced by those who seek more revolutionary and permanent changes. That said, those who were serious about resistance was led in the direction of resurgence, and soon after there was an influx of supporters for action camps that were placed in the path of mega projects on unceded Indigenous territory. Two examples worth mentioning, are the Unis'ot'ten Camp, led by Freda Huson; and the Tiny House Warriors, led by the daughter of Arthur Manuel and granddaughter of George Manuel, her name being Kanahus Manuel. Both of the women's goal was to build infrastructure that would force mega projects to redirect the path of the pipelines that are trying to gain access. Their courage in facing colonization gives chills with their force and the activation of their inherent rights as Indigenous women. Kanahus speaks to as what has got her to this point.

The Elders taught us how incredibly rich our land was and how important to our survival it was to keep it wild, and the other young people in Native Youth showed me that we did not have to passively accept the rape of our land. We could fight back – and we did. We did not go passively when the police attacked us. We defended ourselves and we defended our land.

But more important than all of this was the fact that I was able to get in touch with the spiritual life of our people. One of the Native Youth Movement women was pregnant. She told me she was going to have a

traditional birth, and at first I did not know what it was. But then I also became pregnant and I also had a traditional birth. It was a powerful, life-changing experience.

I had my child on the land surrounded by the Elder women who knew the rituals surrounding birth and the songs that were to be sung. I had my child in the forest looking up at the mountains, and bringing new life in the way my people had since time immemorial.

Three months later, my newborn and I were together in the holding cell in the Bella Coola jail. But even at that painful moment, I knew that for him, I had no choice. I had to fight and continue to fight for his right, for the right of all of my children, to be free from the racist, spirit-destroying colonial system – the genocide – that Canada still continues to serve us. (*Decolonization* 45)

Fighting to disrupt and to secure a future for those who are yet to be born is an everyday fight. When the water comes so easily out of a facet, or when people do not have to face environmental degradation, or the loss of culture, or even the daily struggle of decolonizing in a society who had an agenda of dealing with the “Indian problem”, it can be easy to dismiss such continued destruction for the convenience that capitalism provides. The defense of the land will ensure future generations of fighters will have a better position at penetrating the colonial system into a dysfunctional system forcing to abolish all forms of colonization and to restructure their settler-government to reflect a worldview that honors the land.

Resurgence will confront the source of settler colonial power and as it takes place, the article, “Learning from the land: Indigenous land based pedagogy and decolonization,” states, “Due to the protracted struggle and engagement with this Indigenous movement, settler society would be forced into reckoning with its colonial past and present and undertake in its own decolonizing journey” (Wildcat, et. al.). An example of this confrontation was seen with the Stand with Standing Rock movement, where Indigenous people questioned the corporations and governments right to place a pipeline only a mile north of Standing Rock. The pipeline was originally positioned to go through Bismarck, North Dakota, but residents worried about the pipeline leaking and destroying their water source and so placed it farther south of them. The movement brought thousands of people to occupation camps that engaged on a daily basis direct action to confront colonization. Creating safe space for Indigenous people can happen anywhere needing no validation from colonial structures. As Adam Barker states, “It is important to understand the radical challenge that the assertion of Indigenous political autonomy poses to settler colonial political structures, and also to Settler Canadian identity and culture” (Barker 2015). The primary concern then resorts to understand that the problem is self-inflicted in the form of internalized oppression, because Indigenous people have greater control over their lives compared to previous generations (Poupart).

One area of serious concern is if location would hinder a person’s ability to engage in both processes of decolonization and resurgence. This concern is founded on the many Indigenous people who were displaced due to colonization, such as myself. After deep consideration I do feel decolonization can happen in nearly any space inflicted by colonization. Now, with resurgence, I personally feel being on one’s homeland is

crucial in understanding that connection to place. However, I do feel it does not keep one from engaging, or even supporting the local Indigenous community's efforts towards resurgence.

Living as an Indigenous person on someone else's unceded territory would mean we have to engage in diplomatic behavior to ensure our presence does not continue their oppression. It also meant providing the emotional support that is crucial when the community is experiencing destruction to their sacred land. Simpson's article, "Politics based on justice, diplomacy based on love," shares how Indigenous people were able to co-exist as diplomatic nations on shared territory, prior to colonization. She explains the diplomacy of her people is not respected by Canada or its citizens.

Had I been moving to Victoria, this kind of diplomacy would have carried even greater responsibilities. According to my own traditions, I would have the responsibility to listen, to learn, and to appreciate the jurisdiction, political culture, and traditions of the nation within which I was residing. I would have a responsibility to understand the issues this nation was facing, and I would have an obligation to support and to stand with them. I would have a sacred duty to learn about my place and role within their political structure and their culture, and I would expect the same if one of their citizens moved to my territory. (*Politics Based on Justice, Diplomacy Based on Love*)

### *The Need to Heal*

Ensuring people have a place within Indigenous resistance will ensure a paradigm shift effect because together they will be engaged on unifying content that unfolds the

processes of decolonization and resurgence. Having people share space will have to account for the trauma and will need to prioritize how to heal from internal violence, from domestic abuse, and the neglect we as indigenous people have bestowed on our own loved ones. My good friend and brother, who together we occupied with Apache Stronghold to protect Oak Flat, says it perfectly, “Colonization is helluva drug” (Curley). And with any addiction, we have to come off and withdraw ourselves in order to liberate from the sickening and destructive habits that allows us to think it is okay to perpetuate violence onto our own people. I do not know one native who has not had their lives impacted by substance abuse, domestic abuse, sexual abuse, and even emotional/verbal abuse. Harm perpetuated on Indigenous people by Indigenous people is facilitated through the Canadian state, as Alfred states, “Colonization is a process of disconnecting us from our responsibilities and our respect for the land, and our responsibilities and respect for the culture” (Alfred, *Peace, Power, Righteousness*, 5).

The intellectual pursuits of decolonization and resurgence comes from a deep expression of love, and as Koop says “my key to finding love is the only way out,” found in his song “Memory House” (Curley). When colonization gets us down we have to take into account the need to self-heal and when land is not accessible turning to art is one of the best forms of expression; I turn to music and writing to help get through hardship. Simpson makes a great point with her assertion:

These “social issues” are not social. They are political. They are a direct result of state violence in the form of settler colonialism that maintains and accelerates dispossession. Organizing to support urban and reserve communities on these issues in a politicized way must be part of any

radical resurgence project because within Indigenous grounded normativity, these are our first responsibilities. This means we collectively have a tremendous amount to learn from Indigenous youth because they are disproportionately impacted by all of these social issues and because they are therefore experts on the way out.

This isn't something any state government can do for us...And we must not just ask what is the alternative: we need to do the alternatives over and over until we get it right. This is the work of decolonization and resurgence. (As We Have Always Done 227)

This new generation, the youth, breath life and bring about healing in unimaginable ways, for youth are not as weighed down with colonization as the more experienced are. With the current generations work on decolonization and resurgence, we can create generations where they will not have to go through such process because they will be functioning within authentic Indigenous nationhood. This takes the work of having to deconstruct the layers of colonization that effect our relationships and interpretation of elements and forces, such as the concept of time.

Living life from the past, to present, and into the future is Western Civilization concept of time; moving in a linear fashion, which creates division and disconnection. The problem of structuring time in a linear fashion is discussed in Coulthard's book. He introduces the theory of Karl Marx, *primitive accumulation*, which views the modes of production as existing on this invisible time line towards capitalism (*Red Skin, White*



*Masks*). This perception is what hinders Indigenous people from aligning with his more extensive work on anti-capitalism (*Red Skin, White Masks*). In keeping up with the trend of divide and conquer Marxism feeds the liberal discourse of progression. When the acculturation of Indigenous people's relation to time starts to happen it disrupts their routines and daily functions, which makes it possible to have a greater connection to ancestral knowledge and the land. Western theory counters those values with their constructs of time by viewing the connection of the land as a resource in providing access to material.

When using Indigenous language and theories to live this deconstructs control the colonial state has, this is experienced when Simpson describes the origins of the word, *Biidaaban*.

Susan Blight, a *Nishnaabe* scholar from Treaty 3, told me about her understanding of this word that comes from Elder Alex McKay of *Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwag*. If you split this word apart, it is interesting theoretically and conceptually. To me, it has a lot to do with what we are talking about today. “*Bii*” is a prefix, a future tense; the future is coming towards us, at us, at that moment when the sunlight first comes above the horizon; full anticipation of the future; you can see the whole picture. “*Daa*” is a word for home; the present; the exactly right now. It is a verb for living in a certain place, or in the present. “*Ban*” is a suffix that we add to someone's name after they have passed; it is used for when something doesn't exist.

So every morning, when that first light appears, *biidaaban*, dawn, is a collapsing of the future and the past onto the present; the present is a collapsing of the past and the future. Thinking about that every morning, I don't think so much about futures. But I think a lot about what we are doing in the present, as a moment of creation, of collective presence. (Simpson, et. al. *Panel Discussion*)

The greatest form of justice for our ancestors who faced genocide is to know their seeds have lived in their wild and liberated manner as planned and designed in our political, governing, and social structures. It is helpful to be reminded of our ability to function as our Indigenous self, Simpson affirms, "It is this present, this *presence*, that will create flight paths out of colonialism and into magnificent unfolding of Indigenous placed-based resurgence and nationhoods" (*As We Have Always Done* 193). Transitioning beyond colonization is a strong commitment to healing and taking into consideration others need for healing. A method of producing a healthy identity is based on what Simpson refers to as the "ethic of non-interference," her people saw individuals as having a sense of autonomy within the community, the power to explore and express themselves in a manner that benefits the nation (Simpson *Dancing on our Turtles Back* 47). Would resistance be necessary in a nation when individuals know their role and that the role has worth in the community? Having individual autonomous power supported an environment where judging others was not normalized. Simpson uses the word *Aanjigone*, which means "to be careful not to make judgment of

others” (Simpson *Dancing on our Turtles Back* 47). Living without fear of judgment from the community allows individuals to focus on being a functional member of society; it is the lack of freedom that causes resistance. Simpson explains this in the following passage as she describes an experience her sons had.

On their first visit to Yellowknives Dene First Nation territory, they remarked that they could be more Nishnaabeg in Dene territory than in their own. They asked why there were no police or white people watching us fish, a hundred kilometers off grid outside of Sombe’ke (Yellowknife). Settler surveillance for them is a normalized part of being on the land. They expect it.

They also expect that we will be there anyway, in spite of environmental destruction, despite the violence of surveillance culture, because they were born into a centuries-old legacy of resistance, persistence, and profound love that ties our struggle to other Indigenous peoples in the Americas and throughout the world. It is not happenstance or luck that Indigenous peoples and our lands still exist after centuries of attack. This is our strategic brilliance. Our presence is our weapon, and this is visible to me at every protest, every mobilization, every time a Two Spirit person gifts us with a dance at our powwows, every time we speak our truths, every time we embody Indigenous life. It is visible to me in the Unist’ot’en camp, in the hearts of Moosehide Tanners Against Fascism in Denendeh, in the work of the Native Youth Sexual Health Network, in the forty years of mobilization against mercury contamination and

deforestation at Grassy Narrows First Nation, in Elsipogtog, Kanehsatà:ke, Listuguj, and of course in the phenomenal mobilization against the Dakota Access pipeline in Standing Rock, North Dakota, by the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe and the Oceti Sakowin (The Great Sioux Nation). It is visible to me when we refuse to replicate transphobia and anti-Blackness in our territories. It is our Ancestors working to ensure we exist as Indigenous peoples, as they have always done. (Simpson *As We have Always Done* 5, 6)

## Chapter 6

### OUR EXISTENCE IS RESISTANCE

I want to turn our attention to the resistance that has been taking place on Turtle Island or better known as the Americas. Many people who were participants of INM felt the power in a profound way (Barker; Boulanger, Simpson 316, 317; Irlbacher-Fox 224). Organizers were mobilizing support from settlers by requesting their participation, this was using relationship as action (Irlbacher-Fox 223). The persuasiveness and loving action was causing the surveillance and heavy security of the INM movement, as Stephanie Irlbacher-Fox communicates, “Relationship creates accountability and responsibility for sustained supportive action” (223). To have Canadian police and security on high alert indicates the effectiveness of solidarity/unity/network/relationship forms of strategy, this of course is in direct opposition to settler colonial structures as they maintain divide and conquer a strategy of control over Indigenous people and their citizens.

The movement had great outreach but many felt that under the banner “Idle No More,” it implied individual idleness, which does not take into account the historical significance of Indigenous resistance. Plus, living as an Indigenous person, idle was never an option. Resistance to authority, to capitalism, to internalized colonization always persisted. To illustrate this, there are three prominent figures in resistance that span three generations, the Manuel’s: George, Arthur, and Kanahus. Growing up in the resistance designs the ability to think critically and to place the mobilization of resistance in historical contexts.

What makes INM an interesting case, is the historical context when placed after the Canadian's government policy of reconciliation. This includes a huge report on the damaging effects of the boarding school era, known as the *Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada*.

Reconciliation was Canada's attempt to neutralize allies of Indigenous people, while "radicalizing" those who resisted, as Simpson communicated, "I worry our participation will benefit the state in an asymmetrical fashion, by attempting to neutralize the legitimacy of Indigenous resistance" (*Dancing On Our Turtle's Back*), and this further supported by Coulthard, "Although it is on occasion acknowledged that reactive emotions like anger and resentment can generate both positive and negative effects, more often than not defenders of reconciliation represents these emotional expressions in an unsympathetic light—as irrational, as physically and psychologically unhealthy, as reactionary, backward looking, and even as socially pathological" (*Red Skin, White Masks*). The connection of reconciliation and settler colonialism is apparent in , as Coulthard states, "By contrast, the resurgent approach to recognition advocated here explicitly eschews the instrumental rationality central to the liberal politics of recognition and instead demands that we enact or practices our political commitments to Indigenous national and women's liberation in the cultural form and content of our struggle itself" (Coulthard *Red Skin, White Masks*). The response to colonization rests on the need to prioritize a strong connection to tradition, community, land and decolonizing in a distinct way, distinct in a manner that ensures we challenge the internal colonization living within us.

In building safe decolonial spaces to imagine a resurgent process will ensure future generations can live without the shame that was created out of colonization and the politics of recognition (Coulthard *Red Skin, White Masks*). By creating safe spaces on land and engaging in the process of resurgence this will require the physical space that colonizers have now privatized. Through the activation of using the inherent right to live on the land as the ancestors imagined, this is living in direct opposition to colonization without directly interacting in the disparaging conversation inherent in Indigenous people's experiences (Simpson *Dancing On Our Turtle's Back*). Resistance then takes shape in forms, such as, remembering stories, songs, and language, and because of those small yet highly effective acts of *continuing on* resurgence has the possibility to resurrect Indigenous nationhood. To have this process work at its most efficient, resurgence must be understood within Indigenous theories and methods because of the unique and individual experiences with colonization.

Resource extraction is inherent to colonialism, which is undergirded by ideas of individualism and the individual's access to property. This is to say colonialism facilitates a focus on *the rights of the individual*. Much of settler laws and policies protect the individual over the community, which is what Bill C-45 was set to destroy, Coulthard points out:

Bill C-45 unilaterally undermines Aboriginal and treaty rights by making it easier for First Nations' band councils to lease out reserve lands with minimal community input or support, by gutting environmental protection for lakes and rivers, and by reducing the numbers of resources

development projects that would have required environmental assessment under previous legislation. (*Red Skin, White Masks*)

Canada as an imperialistic empire nullified the original commitment with Indigenous people laid out in the treaties and instead utilized the Doctrine of Discovery. Harper's Bill C-45 continues the infringement on Aboriginal Title (Diabo 51, 52). Russell Diabo, a First Nation rights advocate and Kahnawake Mohawk, compares Bill C-45 and the other eight bills to the 1969 White Papers. In 1968 Pierre Trudeau was elected as Prime Minister and a year later, set out to terminate First Nations' legal title over their lands (George Manuel 122). Both Indigenous peoples and the Canadian citizens saw the flaws with the Indian Act, that the White Papers sought to abolish, however it protects the legal rights over land (George Manuel 123). Nonetheless, Indigenous people met it with heavy opposition (Diabo 54; Coulthard *Red Skin, White Masks*). Fortunately, Prime Minister Trudeau did not follow through with the plan to terminate the tribes, and tabled the report on June 30, 1971. It was the intention of the federal government to implement it in the long term (Diabo 53, 54). The White Papers started the agenda where conservatives and liberals can agree on assimilating First Nations based on the pursuits of economic development (Coulthard *Red Skin, White Masks*). With ventures set on economic endeavors discussions on land negotiations are made, disguised as opportunities for jobs and the funding capabilities needed for community infrastructure.

Europeans in democratic nations, embedded in their liberal discourse are violent indicators that are perpetuated in subtle forms that uphold white supremacy for both liberals and conservatives. During a panel discussion, viewable on YouTube, Coulthard



describes Indigenous struggles as a predictable wave that involves implementing Indian friendly laws and policies, “false promises” (IdleKnowMore *Glen Coulthard*). The obvious lack of fulfillment from government and institutional programs regarding those “false promises,” continue oppression through land and resource encroachment. Direct actions and disrupting settler-society, that happens as a result of land encroachment is met with heavy opposition despite its transformational powers that never get proper recognition, and in fact the opposite. Because those direct actions allow for tokenized Indians to piggyback off their efforts in the form of creating meaningful approaches to the resistance, which ultimately is implementing new and updated false promises.

Laws and policies remain a concern for Indigenous people because it is the means through which governments and corporations claim land and is upheld in the participation of colonial institutions. The Canadian government and corporation lust for land placed them in direct opposition to Indigenous nations since land is vital for both to exist. Canada wanted lands for industrial expansion (Cardinal 54) and felt it was within their power to determine the entitlement based on their terms (Alfred *Peace, Power, Righteousness* 27, 28). Colonization brought development (capitalism) and violence (settler colonialism). Simpson asserts that development and violence lead to the dispossession of her people’s land (Simpson *As We Have Always Done* 43). The 1923 Williams Treaty is an example of colonization’s assault of First Nation sovereign power and nationhood, which Simpson characterized as a termination plan. Simpson’s people have been fighting it for almost a century.

Heralded as the “first modern-day treaty,” it resulted in eighty-nine years without hunting and fishing rights. My grandmother grew up eating

squirrel and groundhogs because if her parents were caught hunting deer or fishing, they were criminalized. In the fall of 2012, as a result of a civil suit, the province of Ontario sent us a letter indicating that it will recognize our treaty rights secured in the earlier, 1818 treaty over a hundred thousand acres in southern Ontario. We will see. We have been living our understanding of our rights, and nearly every year since the treaty was signed, people are charged by conservation officers for hunting and fishing “out of season.” (*As We Have Always Done* 5)

Once Indigenous nations started favoring patriarchy, much of the decisions being made between chiefs and Indian agents/ the Canadian government are not legitimated by traditional standards as women were not involved in the decision making processes. The breakup of matrilineal societies made woman targets for sexual predators, and the Canadian nation overlooks these issues (Coulthard *Red Skin, White Masks*; Alfred *Wasase* 44, Matilpi 262). Many land and mineral extraction sites are located near First Nation reserves, which involves hiring construction and labor workers that set up *man camps* meant to house the workers through the duration of the project (Morin). The connections of MMIW, human trafficking, land extraction, and the colonization of Indigenous people is far too strong and fortunately, scholars-organizers-activist, are directing their attention in this area of research. With INM came the responsibility of taking care of the land and the Indigenous people of those lands.

Movements like INM call attention to the continued colonization because First Nations are at the bitter end of those who benefit from Canadian’s presence. INM

brought many people together while using tools, such as the Internet. Anyone can explore INM on the Internet, there are many YouTube videos where educational institutions and organizations have channels that feature the videos they captured at the events hosted for Indigenous intellectuals. It was obvious, 2013 welcomed activism and the intellectuals that capitalized on the energy and struggles being experienced by Indigenous people. This fostered a global connection of Indigenous people and realized the power to unite is a direct challenge the colonial state is not prepared to deal with. Indigenous power transgressing past colonial borders, shows the divide and conquer tactics in action. Coulthard drew attention to the ways in which the *politics of recognition* has disabled First Nations international relationships that George Manuel highlighted in his book, *The Fourth World*, when he learned from the Tanzanian (Red Skin, White Masks). His remarks on a panel discussion on Black and Indigenous alliances conveyed similar meanings.

What is being targeted are the structural violences and effects of capitalism, of anti-blackness, of displacement, of dispossession, and of course, of heteropatriarchy. Black Lives Matter and Idle No More have consistently been in a contest with those structures of violence. What we see in the media are just percolating crisis points that bleed over into spectacular displays that a media structure that doesn't really give a shit about either indigenous peoples or black peoples is then forced to confront

So they have long histories that intersect....

Where did those cross-fertilizations go? What happened to that type of coalition-building, that sort of solidarity, between people in Africa,

the global South, and Indigenous Peoples of the Fourth World? I think that it was a move from the internationalism of that time to the struggle for constitutional recognition for one's cultural diversity [as happened in Canada] in 1981-82. It placed us as Indigenous Peoples in a silo, thinking only for ourselves, about ourselves, and we forgot about other peoples who are facing similar structural violences in their lives and conditions. (Simpson, et. al. *Panel Discussion*)

Indigenous resistance in a liberal society is difficult because settler colonialism persists even in those who believe inclusion and the full assimilation of Indigenous people into Canadian society is a good thing. Often the problem with colonization is its refusal to accept diversity and then being selective on what it appropriates and extracts. Once Indigenous people expose colonial tactics they quickly repurpose into something else. Once religion was no longer successful in colonization the agenda quickly turned to economic development. The transition was easy because Indigenous people were finally able to find comfort even though it meant participating in the Canadian economic exploitation that opened up greater access to land and its natural elements. Indigenous people are historically and presently conceived as obstacles to development, especially if the nation chooses to not participate in land development. However the purpose of state-sanctioned organizations, such as Assembly of First Nations (AFN), is to maintain fiduciary power for Canada. With movements such as INM, many are not buying into the economic regime. As of now, three major movements have taken place in North, Central,

and South America where Indigenous people reinsert their sovereignty and challenge economic development: Zapatistas, INM, and Standing Rock (Duarte).

## Chapter 7

### CONCLUSION

Five years of following INM and other Indigenous movements provides a small window of perspective of the power and ability of First Nations. This is why understanding the historical context of INM will make a bigger case as to why colonization is not welcomed on unceded territory (Coulthard *#IdleNoMore*). Using the work of scholars to analyze a movement provides new outlooks, examples, and applicable theories to further the resistance efforts of Indigenous nations around the globe. If activist and organizers do not get any sort of validation, that intellectuals provide, the momentum needed for social movements could have died out just as quickly as one starts, that is why we need to understand the vital roles necessary to mobilize resistance. All three scholars, Simpson, Alfred, and Coulthard, expand upon the diverse range of direct action tactics by being involved with the INM movement and producing research that provides radical responses to colonization. Before resurgence, the success of Indigenous resistance rest on the idea of how well actions motivated leadership to to take action in the form honoring Aboriginal Rights, which is seen when reading the works of George Manuel in *The Fourth World* and Harold Cardinal in *The Rebirth of Canada's Indians*. Previous First Nation social movements may have focused on getting recognition from mainstream society, but realizing how deeply entrench colonization and the oppressive behaviors that describe it are, has lead to the production of intellectuals who would redirect that approach. This is why processes of decolonization and resurgence are prioritized in our discussion. Through these processes that are theorized

by the three scholars will help Indigenous nations navigate the proper strategies for change.

INM was that space of visioning that involved people from all around the globe. Cyberspace connected people. Indigenous visioning was happening on a global level and it began with individual stories being shared. Through the stories the power let it showed the paradigm shift that will manifest once the processes to ensure liberation are met. The shift INM advocated after the cooptation of the movement, was the need to have revolutionary elements that decolonization and resurgence brings about, which involves consistent evaluation of actions and thoughts that enter the mind. The paradigm shift will move us from colonization and towards Indigenous nationhood within our respective nations. The educational pursuits of INM was successful for it got many people from a younger generation to think of ways to dismantle colonization.

If it was not for intellectuals who have continued the narrative of Indigenous survival and the creation of theories Indigenous resistance of today would not be what it is. Intellectuals have held on to stories, songs, and ceremonies; in addition to recovering traditional theories and ideas. Decolonization and resurgence are two ideas that have been built upon by Leanne Simpson, Taiaiake Alfred, and Glen Coulthard. Their direction of these two ideas have the power to dismantle colonization because it undermines the power colonization has as it has done to Indigenous nationhood. Intellectuals have a role in social movements and acts of resistance because of their skills in articulating the needs of marginalized communities as well as facilitating theories like decolonization and resurgence.

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